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Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-first session

Geneva, 6 and 7 May 2019

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the twenty-first session*

**To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m.
on Monday, 6 May 2019**

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Adoption of the report of the twentieth session.
3. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference.
4. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment.
5. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting supported by the Shared Environmental Information System.
6. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. Guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators.
8. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level.
9. Other business.
10. Closure of the meeting.

* This document has not been formally edited.

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II. Annotations

According to its terms of reference for 2017–2021 (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II), the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment is open to all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Members of the Working Group represent the national institutions responsible for environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group also involves representatives of programmes and policies and multilateral environmental agreements dealing with the collection of environmental data and information and the generation of environmental assessments — whether covering the environment as a whole, or only certain themes — as well as expert teams.

Also invited to participate are representatives of international organizations, such as the European Environment Agency, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Chair, Ms. Katerina Nikolovska (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), will open the twenty-first session. The Working Group will be invited to adopt the agenda for the session, as set out in the present document.¹

2. Adoption of the report of the twentieth session

The secretariat will summarize the outcomes of the twentieth session of the Working Group (3–4 September 2018) as contained in the report of that session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/2) and invite the Working Group to adopt the report.

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations that were made at the twentieth session, including the consideration of the Working Group's activities by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-fourth session (29–31 January 2019).

3. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

The Working Group's terms of reference require that it prepare an annual timetable of activities and achievements. The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twenty-fourth session, took note of the outline of its activities up to 2021 and the annual timetable of its activities for 2019. No amendments were requested. The Committee also took note of the strong concerns expressed by the Working Group regarding the availability of funds for the financial support of meeting participants, especially from South-Eastern Europe but also from other subregions.

The Working Group will be invited to discuss and finalize its timetable of activities for 2020 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/4) and to take note of the final outline of activities leading up to 2021 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/3), as already adopted through a written silence procedure.

¹ Documentation for the meeting and other relevant information will be posted on the web page for the meeting on the ECE website: www.unece.org/index.php?id=50823.

The secretariat will further provide informal information on the financial resources available to support meetings of the Working Group and its other activities. International organizations will also be invited to report briefly on extrabudgetary projects that relate to the activities of the Working Group.

The terms of reference of the Working Group state that it shall endeavour to submit a mid-term review of progress of its work to the Committee as a stocktaking exercise. The Working Group will be invited to consider an informal document prepared by the secretariat as a possible basis for a report to the next session of the Committee.

4. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment

The terms of reference for the Working Group specify that it shall regularly evaluate the performance of ECE countries in establishing and implementing the Shared Environmental Information System against the targets and performance indicators adopted by the Committee. They also specify that the Working Group shall prepare a mid-term and final report for the Committee on Environmental Policy on the establishment and implementation of SEIS leading up to 2021. At its twenty-third session (14–17 November 2017), the Committee decided to hold a mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, June 2016) as part of the Committee's twenty-fourth session.

During its twenty-fourth session, the Committee welcomed the Mid-term review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System (ECE/CEP/2019/7) and expressed appreciation for the progress achieved in Europe and Central Asia since the Batumi Conference. The Committee also requested the Working Group to lead a further review of progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia in advance of the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

At its twentieth session, the Working Group agreed to adjust the assessment framework used to generate the mid-term review report (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/5) and asked the secretariat to present a revised assessment framework during the next meeting of the Working Group. The Working Group also decided that the revised framework, once approved, would be used for a final report of progress in the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System at the pan-European level for the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

Accordingly, at the twenty-first session, members of the Working Group will be invited to agree on necessary revisions to the revised assessment framework of the Shared Environmental Information System (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/5) and to determine arrangements for the final report of progress on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System ahead of the ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

Furthermore, the Working Group will be invited to review and comment on a draft publication on the Shared Environmental Information System that include the assessment framework, information on progress in the establishment of the System, case studies and other System-relevant topics. The draft version will be made available as an informal document in English only.

5. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting supported by the Shared Environmental Information System

The Working Group has been tasked with leading a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II) for consideration by the Committee on Environmental Policy and leading up to the next Environment for Europe ministerial conference.

During its twentieth session, the Working Group considered a possible concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment as set out in a paper developed by the secretariat and UNEP, in consultation with the European Environment Agency. Following a discussion on the options presented in the concept paper, the Working Group requested the secretariat and UNEP, in consultation with the European Environment Agency, to develop a revised concept and share it with the Working Group members. The Working Group also requested the secretariat to inform the Committee on the outcomes of this agenda item and the suggestions made for the pan-European assessment.

During its twenty-fourth session, the Committee took note of the draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment and the suggestions made by the Working Group for the modalities, scope and form of the assessment. It furthermore requested the Working Group, with the support of the secretariat, working in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency and UNEP, to prepare a detailed proposal, including a timetable, budget and expanded outline, for the assessment to be presented to the Committee at its next session.

The Working Group will be invited to discuss a revised draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6) and, more importantly, to make recommendations on the timetable, budget and expanded outline that can be presented to the Committee during its twenty-fifth session, to be in November 2019. Given the limited time available until the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the recommendations are expected to allow the Working Group to lead the process of consultation on the next pan-European environmental assessment in 2020.

6. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

One objective of the Working Group is to discuss interlinkages between environmental, economic and social considerations regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the green economy and other related areas of work. During its twentieth session, the Working Group was invited to consider data interoperability and sector-specific data concerns within the context of the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System.

In the present session, the Working Group will be invited to consider the gap analysis review reports produced for a United Nations Development Account project on improving environmental monitoring and assessment in support of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, being implemented by ECE and UNEP. The Working Group will also be informed about the Regional Conference on Environmental Data that will be held back-to-back with the present session of the Working Group (8 May 2019). The conference will be organized under the United Nations Development Account project.

The Working Group will also be invited to discuss how it could continue its work on integrating economic, social and environmental data into the Shared Environmental Information System.

7. Guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators

During its fourteenth session (Rome, 2–3 October 2017), the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators requested the secretariat to consider establishing a web-based portal through which users could seek guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators, while recognizing the secretariat's resource constraints (ECE/CEPCES/GE.1/2017/6).

The Working Group discussed the establishment of a web-based portal, during its twentieth session, and noted the information provided by the secretariat on a possible web-based portal. The Working Group was particularly concerned about the resource implications of establishing a web-based portal and the difficulty of maintaining it, while recognizing the value of such a system. Having these concerns in mind, the Working Group invited the secretariat to explore further possibilities in this regard and to report back during its next session. The secretariat will report to the Working Group accordingly.

At its fifteenth session (Geneva, 25–26 October), the Joint Task Force considered how the ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators could be further revised and improved. It requested the secretariat to draft a workplan for the review of the guidelines and invite experts from the Joint Task Force and other expert communities to participate in the review.

The Working Group will be informed about the progress made in reviewing the ECE set of environmental indicators and the associated guidelines.

8. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level

Members of the Working Group, and especially those representing countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, will be invited to share information on major actions taken since the previous meeting regarding:

- (a) The production of environmental reports, analyses and assessments based on environmental information and indicators, including through the use of the Shared Environmental Information System;
- (b) The modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks, in particular those on air, water and soil;
- (c) Improvements in data quality assurance and control, as well as the management of data;
- (d) Improvements in data policy and institutional and regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions for data exchange between various ministries and agencies (ministries of environment, environment agencies and ministries of agriculture, energy, health, industry, transport and water) and with other users, including the public;
- (e) The implementation of recommendations regarding environmental monitoring and assessment made in national environmental performance reviews.

The secretariat will prepare and circulate a template to support oral presentations, as needed.

9. Other business

The Working Group will be invited to discuss any other business that might be brought to its attention. Members of the Working Group wishing to propose items are invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

10. Closure of the meeting

The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, will sum up the conclusions and decisions of the Working Group and close the meeting. The report of the meeting and the list of participants will be finalized by the secretariat for circulation to the Working Group after the meeting. These documents will be posted on the meeting website.

III. Organization of work

A detailed organization of work will be released closer to the meeting date and will be posted on the web page for the meeting.
